

Annual Report of the Fostering Service 2018-19

July 2019

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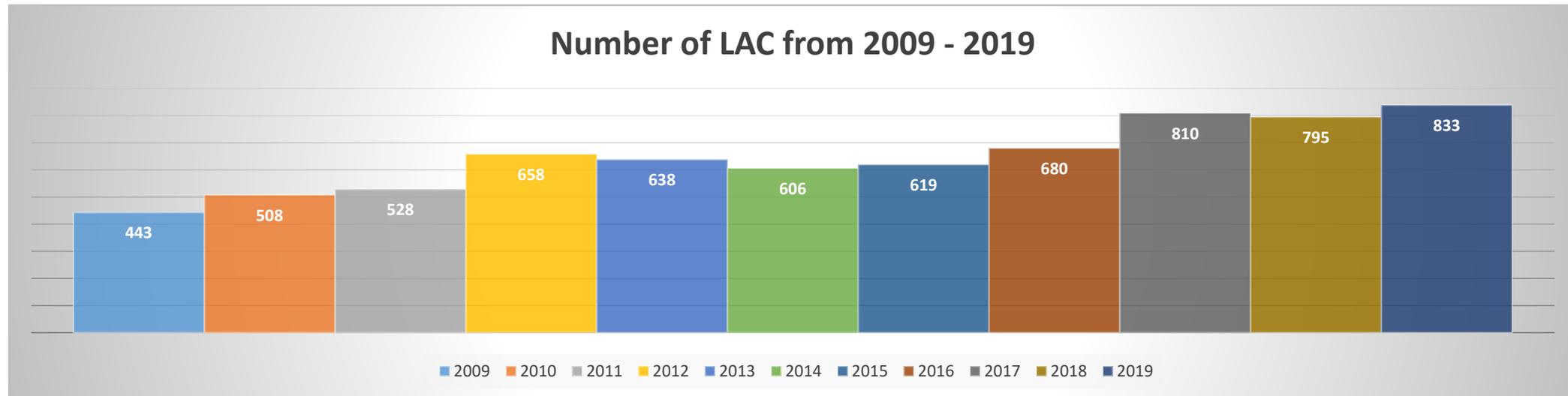
Outline

- Context of the Fostering Service
- Progress against key Priorities
- Priorities for 2019-20

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Context of the Fostering Service – Looked After Children Numbers



Durham County Council has seen a 5% rise in the overall numbers of Children Looked After during 2018-19, (795 to 833* CLA) as at 31st March 2019*. Despite these challenges, the fostering service has been able to maximise the use of our in house foster carers with an overall increase of 408 children placed, compared with 400 in 2017-18; the number of children placed with Independent Foster Carer has reduced to 120, compared with 132 the previous year.

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Context of the Fostering Service – How we are Looking After Our Children

Placement Type	Total Number 2017/18	% of LAC Population 2017/18	Total Number 2018/19	% of LAC Population 2018/19
DCC Foster Care	400	51%	408	49%
Friends and Family	129	16%	137	16%
IFA	132	17%	120	14%
Placed with Parents	33	4%	64	8%
DCC Residential	32	4%	32	4%
External Residential	26	3%	28	3%
Placed for Adoption	25	3%	26	3%
Independent Living	16	2%	23	3%
Secure	2	0%	1	0%

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Key Priorities

The following key priorities were identified in the previous years annual report as a key focus for 2018-19

1. Recruitment of Foster Carers
2. Retention of Foster Carers
3. Permanence Planning for Children in foster care
4. Placement Stability

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Recruitment of Foster Carers

- The service recruited 26 mainstream foster carer households during 2018-19. This is 4 carer households below our set target of 30, moreover this is a reduction of 2 carer households compared with the previous year.
- The number of enquiries had also reduced in comparison to the previous year; with only 208 enquiries for April to December 2018, compared to 259 the previous year. Following an analysis of our recruitment activity, our marketing strategy was amended over the course of the year resulting in the number of enquiries improving significantly (113) between January and March 2019. Recruitment activity will be closely monitored and remains a priority in our 2019-20 plan.

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Retention of Foster Carers

- Despite a reduction in recruitment of carers the overall foster carer population has grown over the past year due to a decrease in the number of foster carer de-registrations.
- In total 9 mainstream foster carer households de-registered in 2018-19, which is a significant reduction when compared to previous years.

Foster Carers	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	<u>2018/19</u>
Number De-registered	14	15	17	20	23	<u>9</u>
% of Total Number of Foster Carers	6.3	6.6	7.2	8.4	9.4	<u>3.5</u>

- All carers who de-register from the service are invited to attend the fostering panel so reasons for de-registration can be fully understood and to inform future service development.
- The service has further developed our existing foster carer support groups and improved overall consultation and liaison with our carers regarding service development, with the strengthening of the training available to carers this has supported the retention of carers.

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Permanence Planning

- The service has maintained focus on progressing permanence plans for children and reducing delay through effective and early identification; we also have a service wide approach to family finding and matching which has led to an improvement in our performance for permanence planning seeing the number of children without a permanent placement identified reducing to 9, compared to 49 the previous year. Currently there are 37 children in permanent placements awaiting a formal match, plans are in place to progress these over the coming year.

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Placement Stability

- To improve our performance regarding placement stability the service have developed a placement stability strategy and action plan, this has been implemented over the past year. Current performance for placement stability has improved with now 7% of children having experienced 3 or more placement moves (59 children) compared with 8.3% (66 children) the previous year. The aim is to build upon this progress and reduce this number further over the coming year.

Performance Indicator	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Percentage of children looked after with 3 or more placements [number of children shown in brackets]	12.9% [78 of 606]	6.5% [40 of 619]	4.4% [30 of 678]	6.1% [50 of 814]	8.3% [66 of 734]	7.02% [59 of 839]

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Priorities for 2019-20

- Recruitment and Retention of good quality Foster Carers to enable placement choice for children – In accordance with the Council's sufficiency duty the target for foster carer recruitment for 2019-20 is to recruit 25-30 new foster carer households.
- Targeted recruitment for teenage carers and carers for siblings.
- Review capacity of existing foster carer families to maximise potential of foster carers' capacity, including via exploration of accommodation options for approved foster carers.
- Review of Residential service to support greater flexibility of placement options and support more effective matching of Young People with complex needs, providing wrap around support for carers and young people
- Embedding Signs of Safety across the Fostering Service

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Priorities for 2019-20 continued

- Embedding Liquid Logic –much work was undertaken to implement the new case management system over the past year, and the focus in the coming year will be on embedding the system and linking the increased performance management capabilities with achieving more timely and positive outcomes for children and young people
- Change to Regulation 24 / Special Guardianship processes – the focus of this development will be to improve experiences and reduce drift and delay for children, young people and their carers. The fostering service will take lead responsibility for the completion of initial viability assessments and special guardianship reports.
- Continued focus on the voice of the child – a revised audit tool to ensure the prevalence of the voice of the child in foster carers records has been developed and will be implemented
- Placement Stability – building upon the improvement in performance following the placement stability strategy ongoing focus will be kept upon the fostering service's role in ensuring placement stability for children and young people in the coming year

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Any Questions ?

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